

Deep Culture Podcast – Transcript	
<p>The Deep Culture Podcast explores the psychological impact of intercultural experiences, informed by the sciences of brain, culture and mind. Join hosts Joseph Shaules and Yvonne van der Pol as we look at the personal growth that can come from travel, living and working abroad, learning a foreign language, growing up in a multicultural context—and the challenges of bridging different cultural worlds.</p>	
<p>(Episode 41 – Motivation and Culture)</p>	
<p>Is motivation a basic drive that's the same everywhere? Does it depend on culture? Yvonne and Joseph explore the latest insights into culture and motivation. We learn that our experience of motivation depends on our cultural self. We hear stories from Liu Liu, Emre Seven and Ishita Ray about independent versus interdependent motivation, and find out about the two motivational systems that are critical for cultural learning.</p>	

Time	Speaker	
00:00:00	Yvonne	(Hook) When told that their mothers had chosen which puzzles to work on, they performed much more poorly with one child even exclaiming incredulously, “You asked my mother?”
00:00:23	Joseph	This is Joseph Shaules and welcome to the Deep Culture podcast, where we explore culture and the science of mind. And I'm here with Yvonne Van der Pol. It's great to be with you, Yvonne.
00:00:34	Yvonne	Hi Joseph. Wonderful to be here.
00:00:38	Joseph	Yvonne, this episode is about culture and motivation, and we've been talking about doing an episode on this for quite a while.
00:00:46	Yvonne	I'm interested in motivation because having cultural knowledge doesn't automatically make one open to foreign experiences. What is it that motivates us to go out of our cultural comfort zone?
00:01:00	Joseph	Also, we both wanted to talk again about an article that we've mentioned before, <i>Culture and the Self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation</i> by Hazel Rose Markus and Shinobu Kitayama.
00:01:15	Yvonne	Yes, it was published way back in 1991, but it's important because it changed the way many people thought about culture and the mind. For a long time, psychologists largely assumed that the mind functions the same for everyone, everywhere.
00:01:32	Joseph	But Markus and Kitayama said this isn't true. They showed that culture affects fundamental aspects of brain function - cognition, emotion, and motivation... Why we do what we do.
00:01:48	Yvonne	We've talked about culture and emotion in episode 29. Also, we've often talked about culture and cognition, but we haven't explored culture and motivation yet.
00:01:59	Joseph	Well, we use the word motivation all the time, so it's easy to feel like we understand it.
00:02:04	Yvonne	I think the commonsense idea is that motivation is like a basic human drive we have inside of us. So maybe it seems that it should be the same everywhere. It shouldn't depend on culture.

00:02:17	Joseph	So, the article argues that culture shapes how people experience motivation because culture shapes our experience of the self, our relation to those around us. So, in this episode, we'll dig in to the topic of motivation and culture, and we'll see that from the brain mind perspective, motivation is not a thing that we have. It's a relationship between an organism and the environment. And that brings us to part one, The dog and the sausage.
Part One – The Dog and the Sausage		
	Joseph	Yvonne since the word motivation is such a slippery concept, let's start with a definition.
00:03:03	Yvonne	Let's look into Wikipedia. It says motivation is, quote: “an internal state that propels individuals to engage in goal directed behavior.”
00:03:16	Joseph	We all experience this. I feel hungry. That's my state. And that makes me take action to get up off the sofa and go to the freezer to get some ice cream.
00:03:27	Yvonne	Wikipedia goes on to say that motivation is often understood as a quote unquote “force” that explains why people do something.
00:03:37	Joseph	This is why, in English, we talk about having or not having motivation or finding or losing motivation. It's experienced as a thing we have, almost like a fuel that makes our engine go.
00:03:50	Yvonne	But what fascinates me is that this feeling of motivation as a thing inside us, as a fuel or as a switch you can turn on or off. It's not the only way to think about or experience motivation. In fact, you are more likely to experience motivation this way if you were raised in a more individualist society.
00:04:14	Joseph	And we'll definitely get back to that. But let's first get a bit deeper into the definition of motivation.
00:04:21	Yvonne	Well, motivation is, quote: “a complex phenomenon, and its precise definition is disputed.” And that's because there are many ways to talk about or look at motivation.
00:04:37	Joseph	For example, you might hear about extrinsic motivation when you want to get a reward versus intrinsic motivation, when an activity is rewarding for itself. And you can talk about conscious motivation versus unconscious motivation.
00:04:54	Yvonne	It's easy to get lost in the details. But one thing we can say is that from the brain mind perspective, motivation is not a thing that's inside of us.
00:05:05	Joseph	No, it's more accurate to say that motivation is a relationship between an organism and the environment. My friend and colleague Gabriela Schmidt says: if I have a sausage that my dog wants to eat, is that intrinsic or extrinsic? Is it inside the dog or outside the dog? And the point is that motivation, the desire to eat the sausage, depends on the state of the organism, the dog's hunger, and the state of the environment, the sausage in front of the dog. Also, our inner self is shaped by the environment we grow up in. For example, the foods you grew up with will motivate you to eat certain dishes and not others. And

		the values you internalize growing up will shape the kind of person you want to be. Your environment shapes your motivation.
00:06:06	Yvonne	Markus and Kitayama's article, <i>Culture and the self</i> , goes beyond that. They argue that because culture shapes how we experience the self, it affects how we experience motivation.
00:06:20	Joseph	We mean whether we feel ourselves as largely separate from others, an independent sense of self, or as closely related to others, an interdependent sense of self.
00:06:31	Yvonne	When we talk about the idea of motivation as an inner drive, this is a very natural way to think about it. If you grew up in an individualist society, because we tend to think of the self as something separate from others and as having certain inner qualities that make me special.
00:06:50	Joseph	...and motivation as an inner drive fits right into that. This is my motivation that pushes me towards my unique goals. There's a real emphasis on the things that set you apart.
00:07:05	Yvonne	And if you grew up that way, you might think, well, how else is there to be motivated?
00:07:13	Joseph	But if you grow up in a society that emphasizes our relationships with others, there's not such a clear boundary between 'my' and 'us'. Our self exists in relation to others.
00:07:26	Yvonne	So, one very simple way to say it, is that independent motivation asks the question, what is best for me? Whereas interdependent motivation asks, what is best for us?
00:07:41	Joseph	And this reminds me of a story that Ishita Ray told in episode 13. She talks about how odd it was for her in France that people ordered food for themselves individually and how different that was compared to what she was used to in India. Let's listen back.
00:08:04	Ishita	When I was in France for the first time, I was invited to a dinner at a restaurant with my colleagues from a school where I had just started working. When we started ordering, I realized everyone ordered only for themselves. Everyone had made their decision quite quickly and were all waiting for me to decide what I wanted. My mind froze. Back in India, ordering food is a significant part of the evening in and by itself, especially with people you are only getting to know. Actually, it's a slow, patient process of finding out what the others really want to eat, deciding who can share what with whom, how much food will be enough, and so on. It reflects how deep down you put others' preferences ahead of your own when taking decisions. On that evening with my French colleagues, everyone knew exactly what they wanted and were also very clear in expressing it. In a way, looking after one's own interest is also a way of ensuring that everyone in the group has what he or she prefers. But from where I was looking on that day, voicing my choice out loud felt selfish.
00:10:18	Yvonne	Overall, from the Dutch perspective, ordering for oneself isn't selfish. It's a way to make sure that everyone's needs get met.

00:10:27	Joseph	And I think it's the same from the American perspective. I can also imagine an American asking, "Well, if you're always thinking about everyone else's needs, then your needs are never met."
00:10:38	Yvonne	In fact, the logic is that other people are paying attention to your needs, so you don't need to constantly be asserting yourself and trying to stand out.
00:10:50	Joseph	Independent motivation assumes that if I do what's best for me, I'll have something to give to others, whereas interdependent motivation assumes that if we all do what's best for us, then my individual needs will be met.
00:11:05	Yvonne	You could also say that independent motivation is about what makes me proud, whereas interdependent motivation is about what makes us proud.
00:11:16	Joseph	And that brings us to part two: "You asked my mother?"
"You asked my mother?"		
	Joseph	So, let's get back to this idea that motivation relates to why people do what they do. There's very interesting research by Sheena Iyengar, a professor at Columbia Business School, which measured the impact of cultural values on motivation in children in the US. She had a group of Anglo-American and Asian-American children do word puzzles. Under one set of conditions, children were allowed to choose which puzzles they wanted to do. Under another set of conditions, children were told that their mothers had chosen the puzzles for them to do.
00:12:15	Yvonne	You may guess that Anglo-American children were more highly motivated when they chose the puzzles themselves, and that's true. They completed three times as many. When told that their mothers had chosen which puzzles to work on, they performed much more poorly, with one child even exclaiming incredulously, "You asked my mother?"
00:12:41	Joseph	But the Asian American children were different. When they chose which puzzle to solve, they scored nearly as high as the Anglo-American children. But when told that their mothers had chosen the puzzles, they scored even higher, completing nearly four times as many puzzles as the Anglo-American children under the same conditions.
00:13:03	Yvonne	Iyengar argues that the Asian-American children identify more closely with their parents. They don't see themselves as existing separately and in opposition to them, but rather as being intimately connected to them. In other words, their motivation is interdependent.
00:13:24	Joseph	I really like the term prosocial motivation because that captures the idea that motivation doesn't have to simply be about getting something for yourself.
00:13:34	Yvonne	Well, I think we should also step back and recognize that both independent motivation and interdependent motivation can have downsides.

00:13:44	Joseph	Because, of course, there can be conflict between deciding yourself and going along with others. And this is something that was experienced by Liu Liu, our new team member here on the podcast. Let's take a listen.
00:14:04	Liu	Growing up in China, my goals and targets were set for me. Because my dad loves Math and Physics, he directed me to study similar subjects. My motivation back then was to fulfill my dad's expectations of me. Because these expectations didn't align with who I am and what my strengths are, I didn't do well in any of the subjects and didn't get into university. That brought dissatisfaction and disgrace to my whole family. Later, I moved to the UK. I got a low-level job in the mailroom, and this felt beneath me because I come from a family of well-educated high achievers. And I wanted to become someone whom they feel proud of. But I was no longer in China, I didn't have the same social expectations around me because my dad and others didn't understand life in the UK. This meant my motivation shifted from an interdependent, external drive to an independent, internal drive. It started with understanding selfness, my own identity. In Chinese culture, individualism carries quite a negative meaning. Transitioning from an interdependent culture to an independent culture is like driving with an instructor and driving by yourself. You are not told what to do anymore, but you are also responsible for your actions. Your social group doesn't make demands, but it's not there to support you either. I felt a sense of release, and at the same time, it was scary. I had to learn what I'm good at and what I'm passionate about. That mailroom put me on a path of independent motivation and self-discovery.
00:16:43	Yvonne	I love Liu's story, and he has come a long, long way from that mailroom. He has advanced degrees, he has worked all over the world doing development work, and he's an intercultural coach and trainer. Welcome, Liu.
00:17:00	Joseph	You know, Liu's story resonates with anyone who has had to go against social expectations or perhaps doesn't fit in or is misunderstood. And this is a pitfall of interdependent motivation. You may face great pressure to do what others think is best, regardless of what's right for you.
00:17:20	Yvonne	And this can lead to terrible suffering for individuals in communities with strict moral codes. Someone who wants, for example, to marry outside their community, whose sexual orientation is condemned, or perhaps where women are expected to limit themselves to certain roles.
00:17:43	Joseph	There are pitfalls to independent motivation as well. This idea of making it on your own when our success or failure is left up to us, perhaps without much community or support. It's easy to feel inadequate because we own both our successes and failures. If I'm not 'living the dream', as they say, there must be something wrong with me.
00:18:07	Yvonne	From what I understand, Joseph, in the United States, people talk about deaths of despair and an epidemic of loneliness.

00:18:16	Joseph	Yes, it's true. American society focuses heavily on the individual and the need to set yourself apart. At the same time, traditional community bonds are weakening. In one study done by Peter Sterling and Michael Platt at the University of Pennsylvania, the researchers argue that the high number of deaths by suicide and drug overdose in the US are related to the fact that Americans are living increasingly isolated lives with few of the social bonds that are typical in more collectivist communities.
00:18:52	Yvonne	In contrast, interdependent motivation comes from having a strong sense of connection to others. Everyone is in this together. So where does this leave us? I think we should say that we've been talking about independent and interdependent motivation as though they contradict each other. But that's not necessarily true. And I think one example of this is the story that podcast team member Emre Seven told in Episode 38. He talked about his motivation to learn English and travel. Let's listen back.
00:19:33	Emre	In my family, exotic things like English and foreign countries were something far away. That was like a dream for me. But I had someone pointing the way. My father's brother, my uncle Erdal. Uncle Erdal commanded great respect in my family. He was a successful banker. He was the first person in our family to get a B.A., an advanced education in English language and literature. I aspired to follow in his footsteps. I wanted to be just like him. I did well in school, and I was so proud when I would hear a family member say: "He will be as successful as his uncle!". All this reached new heights when I heard that my uncle had gone abroad to Hungary for a holiday with friends. The story of his trip was recounted over and over by different family members, which only strengthened my resolve to pursue the same path. And I did. I graduated from Samsun Anadolu Lisesi, his high school. I got my BA from Hacettepe University, the same as him, and from the same department, English Language and Literature. English was an entry point into new worlds.
00:21:16	Yvonne	I love the ways in which Emre's motivation was both very individual, very internal to him. But at the same time, he was supported and inspired by his family.
00:21:28	Joseph	So perhaps it's when independent and interdependent motivation complement each other that we really achieve the most.
00:21:37	Yvonne	So, Markus and Kitayama's work have helped us understand these different motivation dynamics, which raises the question, what are researchers saying today about culture and motivation - many years after their landmark paper in 1991?
00:21:55	Joseph	And that brings us to part three: Approach and Avoidance.
Part 3: Approach and Avoidance		

	Joseph	Let's start by saying that Markus and Kitayama's work nowadays is widely accepted in social and cognitive psychology and cultural neuroscience.
00:22:27	Yvonne	And research has continued. For example, Heejung Kim and Smaranda Lawrie argue that independent and interdependent motivation is not just about standing out or fitting in. It affects many other aspects of life as well.
00:22:45	Joseph	For example, do you tend to be more motivated by instrumental goals - concrete things which bring you a direct benefit - or an emotional connection that comes from accomplishing something?
00:22:58	Yvonne	For many people in the world, doing things that connect you to others is highly motivating. I think we can feel this in Emre's story of feeling proud to be compared to his uncle.
00:23:12	Joseph	And are you more motivated by a desire to be different or to be highly thought of within your community? Because what motivates one person may not motivate another.
00:23:25	Yvonne	Well, I remember a couple of years ago, some colleagues asked me to join a training on motivational interviewing - MI.
00:23:33	Joseph	And if you're not familiar with it, motivational interviewing is a counseling approach designed to help people make changes in their life.
00:23:41	Yvonne	It was developed in the USA, and to me it felt very rooted in individualistic ideas about motivation. But the MI practitioners I worked with found that their method often didn't work so well with clients from minority communities. I even felt that some practitioners looked down on the idea that people would change themselves for others, for their peers or family or their religious community.
00:24:11	Joseph	That doesn't surprise me. As an American, I grew up with the idea that success is something that individuals achieve based on their unique abilities.
00:24:32	Yvonne	And there's something else that I came across when we were preparing for this episode. These differences in motivation can even make a difference for global issues, such as a desire to take action on the environment. Using data from the World Values Survey, researchers found that in countries high in individualism, pro environmental beliefs motivated support for pro environmental action, an inner motivation. Whereas in countries high in collectivism, pro environmental social norms predicted pro environmental action.
00:25:13	Joseph	So, for example, where I live in Tokyo, my neighbors are very conscientious about separating their trash into multiple categories. And I think the fact that everyone does it is a very strong motivator. It's seen as a collective good and less as a personal stance towards the environment. I think there's one other insight from brain mind sciences that is super important for cultural bridge people. And that's the difference between approach and avoidance motivation. And this gets a bit technical, but the brain has two competing motivational systems.

		Approach motivation regulates behavior that seeks a positive reward, whereas avoidance motivation regulates behavior that seeks to get away from or avoid negative consequences.
00:26:07	Yvonne	I think of this as a kind of positive motivation - I want that - and negative motivation - keep me away from that. So, these two motivational systems, approach motivation and avoidance motivation, operate independently, which is why we can want to pet our neighbor's dog but be afraid of it at the same time.
00:26:33	Joseph	This is important for cultural bridge people, because in more collectivist communities, avoidance can be a strong motivator. You are motivated not to embarrass your family, for example, or not to stand out too much. But it's also important to understand when we are adapting to a foreign environment.
00:27:01	Yvonne	And that's because cultural learning requires motivation. We need to want to learn or adapt when we have foreign experiences. I find some people have quite a strong resistance to learning about cultural difference.
00:27:17	Joseph	And so cultural learning requires managing both of our motivational systems. Our approach motivation may be activated when we feel curious about the differences we find. It makes us want to adapt and try new things.
00:27:30	Yvonne	But our avoidance motivation can be activated when we resist the difference that we find. And we talked about resistance in Episode 14.
00:27:40	Joseph	And the key point here is that resistance is a natural part of cultural learning. We all resist difference to some degree or another. We make ethnocentric judgments, we dislike the food, whatever. But if we can become aware of our own resistance, we can manage it better.
00:28:00	Yvonne	And we may also have mixed motivations when having foreign experiences - adaptation and resistance at the same time. We like the food but not the people, or vice versa. And this brings us back to the idea that motivation is not something we have inside of us, it's an interaction between us and our environment.
00:28:25	Joseph	That's also one of the main conclusions from the recent research by Kim and Lawrie.
00:28:30	Yvonne	Indeed, they say that to understand human motivation across cultures, we must see people in context, with an understanding of the specific demands of the environment, history, nature, and society.
00:28:46	Joseph	And as cultural bridge people. We also need to understand that cultural learning involves motivation, not just the openness and curiosity we need, but our natural tendency to experience resistance.
00:29:00	Yvonne	So hopefully, by understanding the ins and outs of motivation and culture, we can make sense of the different things that motivate people. And maybe this can even help us to manage our own cultural learning, the resistance we may feel, and our motivation to adapt and to learn.
00:29:22	Joseph	Which seems like a good place to bring this episode to a close.

		<p>We talked about the research of Heejung Kim and Smaranda Lawrie that comes from <i>The Handbook of Cultural Psychology, Second edition</i>. The research into children solving puzzles comes from Sheena Iyengar's book <i>The Art of Choosing</i>. Also, we mentioned research about deaths of despair. For more about that, check out <i>Deaths of despair on the rise in the US</i> by Jessica Freeborn. You can find that in Medical News Today. To learn more about resistance and adaptation, check out my book <i>Deep Culture: The Hidden Barriers to Global Living</i>.</p> <p>The Deep Culture podcast is totally noncommercial. It is sponsored by the Japan Intercultural Institute, an NPO dedicated to intercultural education and research. I am the director of JII. Transcripts of all the episodes are available on the JII website. If you want to get involved in developing materials for using this podcast in your class or training, get in touch at dcpodcast@japanintercultural.org</p> <p>And please support us by becoming a member of JII. Just do a web search for the Japan Intercultural Institute. This episode was coproduced by Yvonne Van der Pol and Ishita Ray. Thanks to Emre Seven and Ishita Ray for their stories, and a warm welcome to Liu Liu, who shared his mailroom motivation experiences with us and who is the newest member of the podcast team. Thanks as always to Zeina Matar, Daniel Glinz, Ikumi Fritz, and our sound engineer Rob Fritz. And of course, thanks to you too, Yvonne, for sharing this time with me.</p>
00:31:04	Yvonne	Well, thanks to you too, Joseph. And it was great to work on this episode about motivation with you.